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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

A radio talk by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered through Station WRC and 35 other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, April 29, 1930.

How do you do friends:- Better Homes Week naturally brings to our minds many things we would like to do to improve our living conditions. Take the kitchen, for instance, as referred to by Miss Rokahr, we had a real kitchen problem at our house but we solved it. Our house was evidently designed by a man who knew or cared nothing about that all-important part of a home - the kitchen - and the result was anything but satisfactory, in fact, it was hopeless so we converted it into a storage room and built a new kitchen. It is not this new kitchen, however, that I want to tell you about, except to say that it has four windows that give an abundance of light. Three of the four windows are directly above the sink, work-table and cooking range, overlooking a flower garden with a hedge of Japanese barberry, stretches of green grass, beds of daffodils and tulips in early spring, borders of iris in all their glory, beds of delphinium and other perennials, including a wealth of old-fashioned hollyhocks, then there is a small rose garden, a grape arbor, a rustic arch over which a Van Fleet climbing rose wanders in gorgeous beauty of foliage and flower. Near by is a bird bath in which Mr. and Mrs. Robbin, and many others of the feathered tribe, take their morning plunge, and last but not least, a splendid apple tree, just now in full bloom.

Our flower garden has nothing whatever to do with the inner arrangement of the kitchen, but it certainly does make the hours spent in the kitchen more pleasant for the one whose duty it is to plan and prepare more than one thousand meals each year.

People who pass by may admire a beautiful home in passing, but it is we who live in the house day after day, week after week, who have to gaze on its surroundings. It is our lot to enjoy the beauty or endure the dullness of our surroundings, and the question is, what are we going to do about it? If we could call in a landscape gardener to plan for us - and this is desirable wherever our pocketbook will permit - we could very quickly secure the desired improvements. We can, however, by the use of a few plants from the nursery, supplemented by those that are found growing wild in the vicinity of our homes, do much in the improvement of our home surroundings. I wish I could go with you along stream and through woodland, or on the prairie, and with spade and trowel, dig a few of the choicest of your native plants, and transfer them to your dooryard. For all I know, your home may be on the open prairies of the West or you may live in a tree-sheltered retreat of the Eastern States. Regardless of where you are located, there is always the opportunity to beautify and improve your home surroundings by the use of your native plants.

First of all, make a plan for the improvements around your home; look several years ahead and visualize the result of your efforts when your plan has become a reality. Select only such trees as are adapted to your region. In the South, the list may include the water oak, live oak, and others that grow in your locality. In the northwest the Chinese elm is proving satisfactory.

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In the Northeastern States the American elm, Norway maple, and several kinds of oaks are adapted for home planting. The next important question is where shall the trees be planted. Not in front of the house certainly, but at the sides and the rear where they form a frame or setting for the house, and a screen for the background. Keep the trees at a reasonable distance from the house, and do not crowd them too closely together. Name each of your trees for some of your friends or for a noted statesman of your State.

Shrubbery of various kinds and variety has its place in your planting plan, especially around the foundation of the house, or as a border at the sides of the lawn, but never in the center of the lawn. By the way, a good lawn is just about the most important part of any scheme for the improvement of home surroundings. Don't completely hide the house foundation with shrubbery, but plant it in groups with the tall-growing kinds near the steps and the corners of the house, and the low-growing kinds between, but always leaving the foundation showing in places. Whatever you do, don't smother your home with trees and shrubbery and above all, don't plant a miscellaneous lot of trees and shrubs in the front yard. Whenever I see one of those over-planted places that look like some nursery has doubled the order, I always feel a great desire to roll up my sleeves and wade in with a good, sharp grubbing hoe.

Far be it from me to want to make any of you desire to leave home on account of its surroundings, but if I can make you dissatisfied to the point that you will do something about it, then I shall feel repaid for my effort. First the plan, and the plan well within the means, then the improvement of the soil and any grading or leveling of the soil, next a good lawn and afterward the trees, shrubbery and flowers. Flowers, especially the annuals and perennials, are easy to grow, and if you will start right now to improve your home surroundings, people will soon be saying "what a beautiful home you live in."